

# Lophomyrtus obcordata

## COMMON NAME

Rōhutu

## SYNONYMS

*Eugenia obcordata* Raoul, *Myrtus obcordata* (Raoul) Hook.f.

## FAMILY

Myrtaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Lophomyrtus obcordata* (Raoul) Burret

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

Yes

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

## NVS CODE

LOPOBC

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 22

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2018 | Threatened – Nationally Critical

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Bushy shrub with a corded smooth trunk under flakes of bark bearing small thick heart-shaped leaves. Leaves 5-10mm long, with a distinct notch at tip. Flowers white, single, 6mm wide, with many filaments from white glossy centre, on a stalk to 20mm long. Fruit red to black.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North and South Islands. Patchy and often absent over large parts of the country. More common in the eastern North and South island though locally prominent in some parts of western Northland and Auckland.

## HABITAT

Coastal to montane in forest - though mostly found in coastal and lowland forested habitats. *Lophomyrtus obcordata* is often rather local over large parts of its North Island range though it seems to be reasonably common on the Pouto, Kaipara and Awhitu Peninsulas where it grows on stable sand dunes in a forest dominated by *Kunzea amathicola* (known as rawiritoa to northern Maori (de Lange 2014)). *Lophomyrtus obcordata* is also occasionally dominant in alluvial forest remnants of the eastern South Island. In these places it is often parasitised by the dwarf mistletoe *Korthalsella lindsayi*.



Aorere Delta. Photographer: Simon Walls



Rohutu. Photographer: Jeremy Rolfe

## FEATURES

Shrub up to c.6 m tall. Trunk slender, up to 02 m diameter. Bark greyish pink, chartaceous, flaking in large, irregular shards, underbark pale cream. Branches numerous, erect, compactly branched to spreading. Branchlets initially 4-angled maturing subterete, rather brittle, minutely pubescent. Leaves opposite (sometimes in fascicles), coriaceous, puberulent when young (hairs patent), becoming glabrous with age, glandular punctate, oil glands colourless, leaf lamina and petioles shortly decurrent with branchlet; petiole 0.7-1.0 mm long, brittle; leaf lamina 5-12 × 5-10 mm, obcordate, cuneately narrowed to base, adaxially dark green to grey-green (sometimes tinged red), paler beneath (sometimes tinged pink). Flowers 4-merous, 6-8 mm diameter, borne in axillary, solitary monads on slender, 10-14(-20) mm long, pubescent pedicels. Hypanthium subturbinate, not extending beyond ovary summit, glandular punctate, oil glands colourless (rarely pink tinged), calyx lobes 4, 1.0-1.8 mm long, persistent, spreading, pubescent, oblong, acute. Petals 6-8 × 5-8 mm, suborbicular, white, margins entire to slightly irregular, oil glands colourless. Stamens 60-80(-100 or more), free, in 4 weakly defined whorls, filaments 6-8 mm long, anthers cream, dorsifixed, latrorse. Ovary inferior, 2-3-locular, ovules numerous, in a single row on each linear placenta. Style 6-8 mm long, slender, white, stigma capitate, scarcely dilated. Fruit a broadly ovate, bright to dark red (rarely black or violet) 6-7 mm long berry. Seeds numerous, reniform, 2.0-4.3 mm diameter, testa pale brown, glossy ± smooth, very hard.

## SIMILAR TAXA

*Lophomyrtus bullata* differs from *L. obcordata* by having much larger, distinctly bullate (“bubbly”) suborbicular rather than non-bullate obcordate leaves. *Neomyrtus pedunculata* could be confused with *Lophomyrtus obcordata* but it has obovate-oblong to obovate rather than obcordate leaves, and 5-merous flowers. Often in places where the ranges of *Lophomyrtus bullata* and *L. obcordata* overlap the hybrid *L. ×ralphii* can be found (and sometimes only this hybrid is present the parents presumably having died out for that area). Like *Lophomyrtus bullata* the hybrid has suborbicular leaves, only smaller (up to 16 × 12 mm), and less distinctly or weakly bullate. It is fully fertile and often forms introgressive hybrid swarms. *Lophomyrtus ×ralphii* is popular in cultivation.

## FLOWERING

November - March

## FLOWER COLOURS

Cream, White

## FRUITING

January - May

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed. Can also be grown from semi-hardwood and hardwood cuttings. *Lophomyrtus obcordata* is an attractive and remarkably hardy shrub that does well in a wide range of situations. of the two species in the genus, *L. obcordata* is more commonly grown and sold by nurseries though even then it is still surpassed in nurseries by the diversity of freakish forms and variegated mutants derived from the hybrid *L. ×ralphii* (*L. bullata* × *L. obcordata*). Myrtle rust (*Austropuccinia psidii*) however now poses a serious threat to this species both in the wild and in cultivation.

## THREATS

Seriously threatened by the arrival of myrtle rust (*Austropuccinia psidii*) in New Zealand (de Lange et al. 2018).

Learn more at [myrtlerust.org.nz](http://myrtlerust.org.nz)

## ETYMOLOGY

**lophomyrtus:** From the Greek lophos (crest) and myrtus (myrtle)

**obcordata:** Heart-shaped and notched at the tip

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet including description prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 9 February 2011. Seed description modified from Webb & Simpson (2001).

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- de Lange, P.J. 2014: A revision of the New Zealand *Kunzea ericoides* (Myrtaceae) complex. *PhytoKeys* 40: 1-185.
- de Lange P.J., Rolfe J.R., Barkla J.W., Courtney S.P., Champion, P.D., Perrie, L.R., Beadel S.M., Ford K.A., Breitwieser I., Schönberger I., Hindmarsh-Walls R., Heenan P.B., Ladley K. 2018. Conservation status of New Zealand indigenous vascular plants. 2017. *New Zealand Threat Classification Series*, 22: 1–82.
- Webb, C.J.; Simpson, M.J.A. 2001: Seeds of New Zealand Gymnosperms and Dicotyledons. Christchurch, Manuka Press.

## CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): Lophomyrtus obcordata Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/lophomyrtus-obcordata/> (Date website was queried)

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/lophomyrtus-obcordata/>